ADDRESSES

IN BEHALF OF THE PROPOSED

RELIGIOUS ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IN THE

CONSTITUTION OF PENNSYLVANIA.

By JOHN ALEXANDER, Esq.,

Chairman of Committee on behalf of Petitioners:

AND

T. P. STEVENSON,

Editor of "The Christian Statesman."

DELIVERED IN THE HALL OF THE CONVENTION, ON

MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 24th.

PHILADELPHIA:

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PENNSYLVANIA CONSTITUTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HALL OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION,

ON MONDAY EVENING, MARCH 24, 1873.

The following paper, presented by John Alexander, Esq., Chairman of Committee on behalf of the petitioners, was read by the Secretary of the meeting:

MR. ALEXANDER'S ADDRESS:

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Constitutional Convention:

We, a portion of your constituents, gratefully acknowledge your courtesy in giving us a hearing at this important stage of your deliberations.

That portion of the work of the Convention which will define the relations of Christianity to the state is considered, by a large and thoughtful class of citizens, as the most important and far-reaching that will receive consideration during your sessions. There is, at this time, as we have extensive means of knowing, a wide-spread interest and prayerful anxiety to know what will be the result of your labors upon that important subject. We feel great delicacy in presuming to make any suggestions to you, especially at this late stage of your deliberations; but the transcendant importance of the subject is our apology for soliciting your attention.

You are aware that the founders of our commonwealth, declared their purpose to be, the founding of a "Christian Nation," and, that,

true to this sublime purpose,—they established the eonsistent Christian laws and usages, which early distinguished our beloved State. William Penn, not satisfied with the mere legal title to the soil of Pennsylvania which was eonferred by the British Charter, with an enlarged sense of justice, recognized and peaceably purchased the equitable title from the natives whom he found in possession of the land, thus giving us both the legal and equitable title to the soil without war or bloodshed. Thus, we claim, was deeply laid the foundation for that eombination of law and equity, now so beautifully exemplified in our American system of jurisprudence. Is it not then logical and reasonable to expect, from our historical antecedents that at this time, when called upon to revise our Constitution, we should restore to it at least that explicit recognition of the authority of God and the Divine Revelation which was found in our early Constitution, and which unhappily has so nearly disappeared from the present one.

But, gentlemen, the chief consideration which we wish to emphasize before you is that the present developments of society are forcing upon us, the duty and necessity of taking higher ground,—a step in advance of any yet taken by our own, or any of our sister states. We claim that in addition to acknowledging "Almighty God as the source of authority in civil government," it is also our imperative duty to acknowledge "the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler of Nations, and the Bible as the supreme standard of righteous law," and by thus declaring that this is a Christian Commonwealth, "place the Christian laws, institutions and usages of the state on an undeniable legal basis in our fundamental law."

The malignity of unbelievers against the name of Jesus Christ should not prevent our acknowledgment of Him any more than the opposition of the Atheist to the acknowledgment of Gol. We eannot conceive of any argument opposed to the recognition of Jesus Christ as the revealed ruler of nations, that would not apply with equal force against the recognition of Almighty God.

This Christian duty seems now forced upon us by the bold demands of organized infidelity. We respectfully refer you to the accompanying summary of their demands, which are published by themselves, and which, with great talent and liberal capital, are now urged upon the attention of our citizens:

THE DEMANDS OF LIBERALISM.

1. We demand that churches and other ecclesiastical property shall no longer be exempted from just taxation.

2. We demand that the employment of chaplains in Congress, in state Legislatures, in the navy and militia, and in prisons, asylums, and all other institutions supported by public money, shall be discontinued.

3. We demand that all public appropriations for sectarian educational and

charitable institutions shall cease.

4. We demand that all religious services now sustained by the government shall be abolished; and especially that the use of the Bible in the public schools, whether ostensibly as a text-book or avowedly as a book of religious worship, shall be prohibited.

5. We demand that the appointment, by the President of the United States or by the Governors of the various States, of all religious festivals and fasts shall

wholly cease.

6. We demand that the judicial oaths in the courts and in all other departments of the government shall be abolished, and that simple affirmation under pains and penalties of perjury shall be established in its stead.

7 We demand that all laws directly or indirectly enforcing the observance of

Sunday as the Sabbath shall be repealed.

8. We demand that all laws looking to the enforcement of "Christian" morality shall be abrogated, and that all laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality, equal rights, and impartial liberty.

9. We demand that not only in the Constitution of the United States and of the several States, but also in the practical administration of the same, no privilege or advantage shall be conceded to Christianity or any special religion; that our entire political system shall be founded and administered on a purely secular basis; and that whatever changes shall prove necessary to this end shall be consistently, unflinchingly and promptly made.

Let us begin at once to lay the foundation of a great national party of freedom, which shall demand the entire secularism of our municipal, state and national government.

Let us boldly and with high purpose meet the duty of the hour. Rouse, then, to the great work of freeing America from the usurpation of the Church! Make this continent from ocean to ocean sacred to human liberty! Prove that you are worthy descendants of those whose wisdom and patriotism gave us a Constitution untainted with superstition! Shake off your slumbers, and break the chains to which you have too long tamely submitted.

This is mainly a foreign aggression. We must meet it. The institutions of our country must be administered in the interest of Christianity, according to the teaching and example of our patriotic fathers, or in the interest of infidelity according to the teaching and example of European skeptics and their satellites among us The issues are squarely made and they cannot be evaded. The conflict is irrepressible. The result sure, if we are faithful and have God on our side.

There is ample historical precedent for such an acknowledgment as we desire. In the original frame of government prepared by William Penn in 1692, he declared "the origination and descent of all human

power from God, so that government," he said, "seems to me to be a part of religion itself—a thing sacred in its institutions and ends." The preamble to the first legislative act, passed at Chester the 7th of the 12th month, (December) 1682, recites that "Whereas the glory of Al-"mighty God and the good of mankind are the true ends of government and, therefore, government itself is a venerable ordinance of "God," etc.

The Constitution adopted in 1776 declares that the legislature shall consist of persons "most noted for wisdom and virtue," and that every member should subscribe to the following declaration:

"I do believe in one God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, "the Rewarder of the good and the Punisher of the wicked, and I "acknowledge the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be given "by inspiration."

The Constitution adopted in 1790 contained the following clauses, which were also adopted without change by the Convention of 1838, and have, therefore, for more than ninety years been fundamental law in Pennsylvania:

"That no person who acknowledges the being of a God and a future "state of rewards and punishments shall, on account of his religious "sentiments, be disqualified to hold any office or place of trust "under this Commonwealth." Art. IX., Secs. 3 and 4.

The debates on this clause in the Convention of 1838, leave no doubt that this was understood and intended by the members of that Convention as a respectful recognition of the Christian religion. At the same time we would call attention to its exceedingly imperfect character as an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God over the State, and of the relation of civil government to the religion of Jesus Christ. Its only value is, in connection with the debates upon it in the Convention, to create a constitutional presumption in favor of Christianity, which is of use in the interpretation of law, and this indirect recognition of the Christian religion is the only word or clause in our present Constitution which bears on the subject of religion, unless it be that which provides that "all officers of the State shall be bound by "oath or affirmation to support this Constitution."

We heartily concur in many of the constitutional reforms proposed by this Convention, and respectfully and earnestly submit, in behalf of your memorialists, that, in our judgment, the adoption, in substance at least, of what we propose is indispensable to the success of the many salutary reforms which you have recommended.

A glance at the earnest letters and numerous petitions that are flowing in upon us from all parts of the State will show how imperfectly we represent to you the growing interest of the people upon this Let it be observed that these petitions are not the expression of superficial thinkers or skeptical theorists appealing to the prejudices or to the lawless passions of men, but on the contrary, the calm, well-organized voice of deliberate warning, raised against those false theories of government and religion, which have not only ruined poor France, but now threaten by that little leaven, imported thence into our national Constitution, so to undermine our institutions as in time to destroy us also. For you are doubtless aware that the popular but false and dangerous utterance of Jefferson, that "the people are the source of all power in civil government," was borrowed from Rousseau, the distinguished infidel writer, and promoter of the French Revolution. France in ignoring God and Hisinspired teachings, has "sown the wind" and she is "reaping the whirlwind." She must have the Bible and Sabbath in which to read it, before she can have rest. We want to avoid her error, and, as we justly claim to be a Christian people, and to have a corresponding character, and a vital Christian Constitution, outside and independent of our written Constitution; we respectfully submit to your logical minds to determine whether our written Constitution should not be a fair exponent—a true transcript—of our well-settled vital Constitution. If then we are a Christian people, as a just sequence we ask you to give us a distinctively Christian Constitution to be voted upon by the people. Do not let us be bewildered with the misnomer, Christianity without Christ—the solar system without the sun. One of your thoughtful members has said in our hearing, with a just eye to our mixed, rapidly-increasing population," We must have a stronger government." We cordially endorse his sentiment, and are convinced above all, that if we do not anchor to the eternal Rock of Ages, our noble bark will be added to the many wrecks that strew the shores of time.

Then, gentlemen, give us, in answer to these petitions, the truth, the whole truth, upon the fore-front of our Constitution, and trust the people for a verdict upon your wisdom, and we will ever pray, &c.

JOHN ALEXANDER,

Chairman of Committee on behalf of Petitioners.

PHILADELPHIA, March 24th, 1873.

THE JUSTICE AND NECESSITY

OF THE

PROPOSED ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

AN ARGUMENT

By T. P. Stevenson, Editor of the "Christian Statesman."

Note.—In preparing this argument for the press, one or two passages have been slightly expanded and a few authorities more fully quoted.

Gentlemen of the Constitutional Convention, and Fellow-citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

We appear before you to-uight on behalf of a large and influential constituency. We have come to make known to the honorable Convention now sitting in this hall, the earnest desire of a large portion of the citizens of Pennsylvania that the form of Constitution soon to be submitted to the people shall not fail to contain a suitable acknowledgment of our relation, as a Commonwealth, to God and the Christian Religion. We represent no sect and no party; no church and no class of churches. We owe our appointment to no ecclesiastical body. A body of Christian ministers in this city, having heard this morning of the arrangements made for a meeting in this place, appointed a Committee to meet with us and lend the weight of their influence on behalf of our appeal. But they are here, as we are, not as churchmen, but as citizens, on behalf of the great body of our fellow citizens who have made us their mouth-piece on this occasion.

We ask for nothing which will express the peculiar views of any sect, but only for what is acceptable to the vast majority of the inhabitants of this State. We ask simply, in the language of our petition, for such acknowledgments as will "indicate that this is a Christian Commouwealth, and place all Christian laws, institutions and susages on an undeniable legal basis in our fundamental law." While we do not presume to indicate the precise form of these acknowledgments, we venture to suggest that "an acknowledgment of Almighty God as the

source of authority and power in civil government, of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Ruler of nations, and of the Bible as the supreme standard of righteous law," would serve the end which we wish to secure. We do not wish to embarrass a political instrument with statements which are foreign to its nature and purpose. We ask for no theological declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the Divinity of Christ. But if God is the Author of government and the ultimate source of its powers; if the moral laws of Jesus Christ are a rule for the conduct of governments and nations, as well as individuals, then these ideas are germane, not foreign, to a Constitution of Government.

We are aware that the proposed acknowledgments are more explicit than are to be found in our present Constitution. We yield to no men in our veneration for the wise and patriotic men who sat in the Conventions which have preceded this, or in a just admiration for the results of their labors. But it is a maxim of profound political wisdom that "Constitutions are not made; they grow." They are developed along with the advancing life of the State. It is the necessity for adjusting the Constitution of the Commonwealth to our altered political conditions that has called this Convention together. We believe that a necessity has arisen for embodying in our fundamental law what our fathers deemed unnecessary,—an express acknowledgment of our relation as a State to God and to the Christian Religion.

We rest our appeal on three grounds:

I. The language which we seek to have introduced into our Constitution will express facts. We ask for such a declaration as will "indicate that this is a Christian Commonwealth." We could not ask this, if it were not true. We do ask it because it is the truth.

THIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT WILL EXPRESS THE BELIEF OF THE PEOPLE.

The vast majority of the inhabitants of Pennsylvania believe the three great principles set forth in our petition,—the divine origin of civil government, the binding force of the moral laws of the Christian Réligion, and the authority of the Bible as the revelation of those laws. I know there is an opposing theory of Government, which has its advocates among us. It is what may be called the "secular," as opposed to the religious or Christian theory. It finds the origin of civil society not in the will and arrangement of God, but in an imaginary "social compact." It denies that government has any ends, except those which the people prescribe, or any responsibility except to the people who have set it up. It earnestly denies to government any religious

functions or duties, and regards it as a mere police force, established for mere secular and natural ends. "Government," say the advocates of this theory, "is only the watch-dog at the house of the people;" "its only office is to keep men from picking each other's pockets and breaking each other's bones; "or, as the New York Evening Post has phrased it: "The only office of Government is to make bread cheap." This theory is of unsavory origin and has unsavory associations. It was first set forth in the writings of Thomas Hobbes, and afterwards expounded more fully by Rousseau. It was the theory of the French Revolution and, more recently, of the Paris Commune. It is denied by all the great writers on political science, heathen as well as Christian. Cicero says: "They who fail to recognize the will of God as the fountain of law, lay the foundation of the State, tanquam in aquis, as it were in the sea." Blackstone says: "On these two foundations, the law of nature and the law of revelation, depends all human law." The Bible in its various wisdom has not failed to teach the truth on this point also. "There is no power but of God. The powers that be are ordained of God." This low view of government is not the view on which the government of Pennsylvania rests. This State claims the right to take from the individual what he has no power to concede, —his liberty, and even his life. This State exercises authority over every man on her soil, irrespective of his consent. There was one man once in Massachusetts who asserted the right of the individual to hold himself aloof from "the social compact" at his pleasure. Civil society, he declared, was for those who felt their need of it, as he did not. So he built himself a cabin on the banks of Walden Pond and shut himself up with his books. His name is not unfamiliar on the pages of American literature,—the name of Henry D. Thoreau. When the officers of the Commonwealth came to him for his poll-tax, he consistently refused to pay it. He would assert, at all risks, the right of the individual to cast off society at his pleasure. Massachusetts, however, eould not see the force of his objections and cast him into prison till the tax was paid. I apprehend he would have fared no better in Pennsylvania.

We are well aware that this low view of government is contradicted by what we propose, and by any form of religious acknowledgment in our fundamental law. But it is also contradicted in the whole administration of our government. There can be no truce between the true view of civil society and this false, pernicious, disorganizing, self-destructive theory. Republicanism and Absolutism are not more antagonistic. We only ask, that in this respect, as in its republican character, the Constitution shall truly represent the people of the State. On the

same ground we vindicate every principle involved in the Amendment which we seek.

THESE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AGREE WITH THE ACTUAL CHARACTER OF THE STATE.

This is a Christian Commonwealth, moreover, not only in that Christian ideas of government are the belief of the vast majority of its people, but in that they have impressed these ideas on the whole frame work of their government. Max Muller in his lectures on the Science of Religion, says: "It is language and religion that make a people, but religion is even a more powerful agent than language." Schelling and Hegel as philosophical students of history declare the same truth. Hegel in his Philosophy of History says: "Their idea of God constitutes the general foundation of a people. Whatever is the form of a religion the same is the form of the State and its Constitution." A Mohammedan people conforms its political institutions to the teachings of the The government of a pagan people bears the distinctive features of paganism. Either this Commonwealth conforms to some other than the Christian religion, or it has no religious features whatever, or it is a Christian Commonwealth. The first alternative, that we are of some other religion, will be accepted by no one. The second, that as a State, we have no religion, is contradicted by such facts as these:

- a.) In the Charter granted to William Penn, his object was declared, under the sanction of the English government, to be "to reduce the natives, by just and gentle treatment, to the love of civilized society and the Christian religion."—(Sherman's Governmental History of the United States. p. 371.)
- b.) Christianity has been repeatedly declared to be part of our Common Law. I refer you to the decision of the Supreme Court, in the case of *Updegraff vs. the Commonwealth*, a decision in which the full bench concurred, including such eminent men as Justices Tilghman, Gibson and Duncan, whose names are heard with profound veneration by legal and judicial minds in our own and every other State.
- c.) Our statute laws make many actions criminal which are known as offences only to the Christian religion. I instance blasphemy, bigamy, and the desecration of the Lord's Day. Thus we enforce, with the whole power of the State, a distinctively Christian morality.
- d.) The oath in our courts of justice and in all the departments of government is an act of religious worship, and is undisguisedly Christian in its form. It appeals to the conscience by the authority of the Christian Scriptures, and by the peculiarly Christian formula, "as you shall answer to God at the great day."

e.) We observe various well established acts of public civil worship. In this hall where the Fathers of the State are assembled to exercise the highest functions of legislation, and in our State Legislature, prayers are offered daily in the name of Jesus Christ. These are not the personal devotions of the members. They are organic acts, in which the Commonwealth calls upon its God. Still more manifestly do we worship Him in our State Thanksgivings and Fasts. In these ways we worship, not some vague uncertain Power, the common idea of all religions, but the God who has revealed Himself in the Christian Scriptures, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised to pardon our transgressions and to hear our prayers.

f.) Above all, the whole system of education maintained by the State is Christian. Not only is the Bible read daily in our schools, by the authority of law, but the precepts of Christian morality and the doctrines of the Christian faith are inculcated by the influence of teachers and the contents of the text books. The Christian doctrine of Providence is taught, not technically but not less effectually on that account, in our school histories. The Christian doctrine of the origin of all things is taught in our books of natural science. A series of school-books teaching the views of Huxley and Darwin could not be introduced into a single school district in Pennsylvania. Even the patriotic songs which our children learn to sing, are leavened with religious truth. The "Star Spangled Banner" declares that in "God is our trust."

"Our fathers' God, to thee, Author of liberty, To thee we sing,"

are almost equally familiar words.

These facts deny conclusively the second alternative presented, that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has no recognized religion, and they confirm beyond all controversy the conclusion that there exist definite and well established relations between the government of this Commonwealth and the Christian religion.

II. We argue next that our written Constitution ought to express this fact. I am almost willing to put this on the ground of self-evident propriety, and leave it there without farther argument.

SUCH ACKNOWLEDGMENTS NECESSARY IN A CONSTITUTION.

Many American Constitutions declare that "we, the people, ordain and establish this Constitution." Those words declare and conserve a most important principle,—a principle wrested from absolute sovereigns by kings, but are enacted by the nation. But that is not the whole truth on this subject. The nation itself is the creature of God. The government which it sets up is the ordinance of God. Its duties and functions have been prescribed by him. If a written Constitution properly declares the relation of the government which it establishes to the people, ought it not also to declare the relation of the government to God? If it fails to do so, is there no danger lest the half truth which it declares shall be taken to be the whole truth, and the truth which it omits to mention shall be more and more forgotten and denied? or even that the Constitution itself shall be quoted as teaching the infidel theory of government?

The ends for which government is established seem to demand such an acknowledgment in its Constitution. These are to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, and promote the general welfare." Who bestows these blessings? Is it becoming to set up a government to secure for ourselves such high results, without acknowledging our dependence for them on the Providence of God?

The written Constitution becomes the supreme law for the guidance of rulers in the administration of government. Ought not the people in enacting such a law to link it to the "higher law," lest our rulers forget that there is any other rule for their conduct? We do not want the legislature of Pennsylvania holding its sessions on the Sabbath or enacting laws in contravention of Christian morality.

The Constitution is the charter of the government. It is supposed to cover and authorize all the forms under which our political life shall appear and all the powers which our government may exercise. We have seen that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a religious life and character, and that her government has been charged by the people with important religious functions. Ought not this character to be expressed and these functions of government to be authenticated in the Constitution of the State?

The force of these considerations will, it seems to me, be almost universally admitted.

CITATION OF AUTHORITIES.

There may, however, be some minds with whom the citation of recognized authorities will have still greater weight. Permit me, therefore, to say that all the great writers on Constitutional Law, either directly or indirectly, sustain these conclusions. The most eminent authorities are at pains to distinguish between the vital or actual Constitution of a

people and their written Constitution, and to declare that the utility the latter is in proportion to its faithfulness as a transcript of the former. O. A. Brownson, the able Roman Catholic writer, in his wor entitled "The American Republic," says:

"The Constitution is two-fold—written and unwritten; the Constitution of the people and the Constitution of the Government. The written Constitution: simply a law ordained by the nation or people instituting and organizing the government. The unwritten Constitution is the real or actual Constitution of people, as a state or sovereign community. It is providential, not made by the nation, but born with it."

The masterly work of Judge Jameson, of Chicago, on "The Constitutional Convention," considered as a part of the American system of government, says:

"By the Constitution of a Commonwealth is meant, primarily, its make-up a a political organism. . . . This is a Constitution considered as an objective fact. Besides this, the term 'Constitution' has a secondary meaning as a systematic written statement of such a fact. This is a Constitution considered a an instrument of evidence."

Mr. Mulford, the author of the invaluable treatise entitled "The Nation," says in that work:

"The Constitution of the political people has a two-fold character; there is a real and a formal Constitution. The one is the development of the nation in history—the historical Constitution; the other is the formula which the nation prescribes for its order—the enacted Constitution."

The same authorities declare that the perfection of a written Constitution consists in its accurate agreement with the vital or actual Constitution. Judge Jameson says it is the office of a written Constitution to translate the facts of the unwritten Constitution into legal language and authenticate them.

Mr. Mulford says:

"The formal Constitution must correspond to the real. It is the order in which the people are to act, and the people must find therefore in the written or formal Constitution the expression of its spirit, and its purpose must not be fettered nor perverted by it but it must be able to act in and through it with entire freedom, in the furtherance of its aim. There must be reflected in it its own spirit, and in so far as it fails of this, it has elements of weakness or of peril."

Let us now apply these principles to the question before us. There is no feature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania more clearly manifest, or more important, than her religious character. The religious principle is the most powerful of all the forces that operate in our political life. It is the basis of loyalty and of patriotism, the spring

of our public charities, the inspiring motive that sustains our public ducation. If her written Constitution is to express accurately the rue character of the State, it must declare our relation to God and

eligion.

These principles also determine the form which this acknowledgment hould assume. A mere acknowledgment of God will not suffice, because it is not an accurate expression of the true character of the Comnonwealth. We are a Christian Commonwealth, The distinctive intitutions of Christianity have been incorporated into the frame-work of our government. That these institutions may be covered, authentiated and protected by the fundamental law of the State, that law hould contain an acknowledgment not only of the sovereignty of God out of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Christian religion.*

The practical necessity for such an acknowledgment may be illusrated thus: We will suppose that our State Constitution unfortunately contains no acknowledgment of God or of the Christian religion. oreign atheist comes to our shores and makes his home in Philadephia. In due time he applies for admission as a citizen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Constitution of the State and of the United States is given him, and upon his assent to them he is admitted to the political society. He has by this time acquired property and is taxed, whereupon he lifts up his voice and protests that his rights are violated when the public funds are applied to maintain any religious observances or to inculcate any religious ideas. He falls back on the letter of our political covenant. He dcclares it is not "so nominated in the bond." He did not, he insists, in becoming an American citizen, consent to any acknowledgment of God or of Christianity on the part of the government. He objects, as a citizeu, to being involved in any recognition of a God whose being he denies, or of a religion which he repudiates, and he demands as his constitutional right, that all religious usages and observances of the government shall be discontinued. Especially he demands that the school fund shall not be applied to teach to the children of the Commonwealth, and to his children, any ideas of God or of religion. I am not inventing this argument. It is freely used to-day by a large class of our population, and demonstrates

^{*} The writer recalls the forcible words of Dr. Gannett, the eminent Unitarian elergyman of Boston, recently deceased, who said to him, concerning the proposal simply to acknowledge God in our National Constitution: "This will not do. Mere deism will not save nations any more than it will save men. We must have Christianity."

the newly risen necessity for an acknowledgment of God and the Christian Religion in our Fundamental Law.

THIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT DEMANDED BY PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

III. Accordingly, we present as the third ground of our appeal, tha there are special reasons why any Constitution of government frames in at the present time should not fail to contain such an acknowledgment la Every thoughtful observer knows that there has been for years wha may be called "the irreligious party" in American politics. If it has not been organized, it has wrought the more effectually on that ach count, because it has wrought covertly. It has labored to transform a the American Sabbath into a European Sunday. It has availed to draw the Marriage and Divorce Laws of many of our States far away L from the Christian Standard. It has made a determined and violen is assault in many places on the use of the Bible in the schools and on all the Christian features of our public education. It is re-enforced by constant accessions from abroad. It has been emboldened lately to seck an organization, and to publish its "Demands," which have been read in your hearing to-night. If these "Demands" were the utterance of a single man, or of a hundred men, they would have less significance but they are the formal expression of a spirit and a purpose, which for some time, have been working actively in American society. We appeal to you, Gentlemen of the Constitutional Convention, that you do not arm this party, so opposed in its spirit and purpose to the whole genius of our institutions, with a weapon which they will not fail to use,—a Constitution devoid of all acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God, and the authority of the Christian religion.

The fact that Christianity has repeatedly been declared part of our Common Law is not a sufficient reliance in this emergency. Once, this position was unquestioned in any State of the Union, but decisions adverse to it have lately been given on more than one occasion. The Supreme Court of Ohio, (Bloom vs. Richards, 2 Ohio State Reports, 387) and the Superior Court of New York city have declared that Christianity is not a part of our Common Law. Comstock, in his popular edition of "Kent's Commentaries," declares that according to the best considered authorities Christianity is not a part of the law of the land. In the recent struggle in Cincinnati, one single word in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of Ohio, furnished ground for the decision which retained the use of the Bible and a Christian education generally in the public schools of that city. That word was "religion," and the clause in which it stands is as follows: "Religion, morality and know-

ledge being essentially necessary to good government, schools and the means of instruction shall forever be encouraged by legislative provision, &c." The Court decided that this language implied the inculcation of religion in the schools of the State, and that, in this country, it could refer to no other than the Christiau religion. Had that word been wanting, constitutional basis for that decision could not have been found. The Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of New York has recently decided that under the Constitution and laws of that State, there is no legal warrant for using the Bible in her public schools. Against such abuse of the instrument which you are engaged in perfecting, we respectfully petition you to guard.

Those who have enunciated these carefully digested "Demands of Liberalism" have no conception of the depth and seriousness of the issue which they are forcing upon the people. What is the demand that prayer in our Legislature, and State Thanksgivings and Fasts, shall be abolished, and the Bible be banished from our schools, but the assertion that as a State, we have no right to know, to acknowledge, or to worship our God? In the hour of public chastisement and peril, we are not to be allowed to pray to Him, aud in our prosperity we may not give thanks to Him. We are not to be allowed to teach his name, or his word, or his moral laws, to the generation coming after us. And who are they who thus claim the right to prohibit the Commonwealth from calling on God? An insignificant fraction of our population, the one man in a thousand, who would measure the rights of the state by his own unbelief. Sir, the right to call on God, and to teach his name and laws to her children this Commonwealth will never surrender. And in order that this baneful agitation may proceed no further, we ask you to declare and sanction in the Constitution the relations which now exist between the State of Pennsylvania and the Christian Religion.

AN OBJECTION ANSWERED.

A-single objection is urged to the measure which we propose. It is said that the rights of those citizens who disbelieve in Christianity will be infringed by such an acknowledgment. To which we reply:

- 1. No man is oppressed by the fact that this commonwealth obeys and inculcates the Christian religion. If the fact is not oppressive, how can the declaration of the fact be oppressive to any citizen?
- 2. We approve that feature of the present Constitution which guarantees to every man the right to worship God according to his own convictions of duty, provided there be nothing immoral or criminal in his worship.

3. The apparent difficulty is solved by considering the rights of society in their relation to the rights of the individual. these classes of rights must be pressed to the destruction of the other. Prof. Licber, in his work entitled "Civil Liberty and Self-Government," defines true liberty to consist, on one hand, "in the guarantees of those principles which are most favorable to a manly individual independence, and ungrudged enjoyment of individual humanity," and on the other hand, "in those guarantees which insure the people, meaning the totality of the individuals as a unit, against being driven from the pursuit of the high aims assigned to it by Providence as a nation, or as a united people. Where one or the other is omitted or is exclusively pursued there is no full liberty." We respect the right of the unbeliever to his own opinions. We do not propose to interfere with his inculcation of those opinions upon his own children. But the State has an interest in these children and a responsibility for them, and it is her right to teach them her views of God and his moral government. When those who reject Christianity have become the majority, we shall not dispute their right to conform society to their views. while they have no more right to object against the Christian features of our Commonwealth, or against any legislation deemed necessary to preserve them, than a son of infidel opinions has to object against the Christian worship and instruction of the household.

Upon these grounds, Gentlemen of the Convention, we submit our petition to your consideration, invoking the guidance of the Spirit of wisdom in your deliberations.

The Rev. B. L. Agnew of Philadelphia, on behalf of a Committee appointed by the Presbyterian pastors of this city, delivered a brief and eloquent Address, declaring the unanimous interest of the body which he represented, in the adoption of the proposed acknowledgment.

After a vote, expressing a grateful sense of the courtesy of the Convention in granting the Hall, the meeting adjourned.



